

Thank you for your comment, Helena Bongartz.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is SolarM60205.

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Solar Energy Development PEIS

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Attachment: Solar Energy Development PEIS Comments.pdf

Comment Submitted:

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Before committing a beautiful and unique American landscape to the proposed energy development that will destroy it's character forever, all aspects of these projects should be studied with reference to existing alternatives such as local energy production, for example, grid tied systems, and the benefits they provide. Will the BLM be conducting such studies which would include the cost benefit analysis of all alternative energy options? These studies should include all alternatives available as well those under development and a consideration of whether some of the proposed projects utilize technologies which are inefficient, out of date, or soon to be out of date. What are the side effects of these projects? The following comments address some of these issues.

#### Aesthetics/Visual Resources:

What impact will the proposed energy facilities have on the unbroken and unspoiled vistas of slopes, basins, mountains and lake beds that are the unique qualities of this part of the Mojave Desert? What effect will they have on the uniquely dark night skies? What impact will they have on the vegetation which is unique to the Mojave? These areas are appreciated not only by residents but also by visitors from around the United States and other parts of the world. They are also important for the free recreational opportunities they provide to those who wish to enjoy the peace they offer. And the experience of a landscape largely unaffected by any development whatsoever. What effect would the proposed energy facilities have on the aesthetic and visual quality of these areas? What impact will there be on our annual displays of desert wildflowers and our ability to see and enjoy them?

#### Biological Resources:

Within the proposed study area are populations of endangered and threatened species as well as other wildlife and plants. What impact will the proposed facilities have on

the systems such as water and soil and travel corridors that support these? There are rare dune and other land formations within or adjacent to the study areas, what would be the affect on these?

#### Cultural Resources:

Throughout the area under study there are cultural resources that must be respected. What steps would be taken to identify and protect them? These include but are not limited to those associated with American Indian Tribes. Many parts of this area were homesteaded. These homesteads are a part of our country's cultural heritage and should be protected. The area is also the home of many artists for whom the Mojave Desert provides inspiration. The benefit of their work is passed on to Americans who live here and who do not, forming a cultural link that is vital to connecting people with the unique qualities of this area. How can this be mitigated? There have also been significant paleological finds in this area. How would the use of the land for energy production impact the ability to make further important studies of this aspect of our past?

#### Environmental Justice:

What would the impact be on those who live in the Mojave Desert? Studies need to address the potential negative economic impact on residents. What is the economic impact from the industrialization of the desert on homes, air and water quality, health of residents, and wildlife and to the dark skies and quiet that are the hallmarks of life here? These issues need to be carefully studied. What would be done to mitigate the financial hardship that this damage causes? What have been the impacts both economic and environmental on communities adjacent to energy production facilities such as those proposed throughout the United States?

#### Hazardous Materials/Hazardous Wastes:

This seems a critical area of concern both with regard to our water and our air and ground. The desert is a dry and windy area, with annual heavy flooding washing runoff across the areas of the proposed facilities. The impact of industrial pollutants and hazardous wastes resulting from both present and all potential future activities including worst case scenarios needs to be analyzed. Impacts should be studied for their lifelong potential harm.

#### Land Use:

Within the proposed areas are recreation opportunities, ground and surface water, aquifers, paleontological sites, agriculture, tourism, and geological monuments. What would the impact of the proposed facilities be on these?

#### Noise:

My question is to what extent the level of noise from any and all associated activities will destroy the quiet that is a hallmark of the desert and to what extent it is possible to mitigate this noise. The desert is a silent place. To what degree would the level of noise be monitored? What system would be established to monitor and control noise? What system would be put in place to allow residents effective response to unacceptable levels of noise? What study would be done to determine what an acceptable level of noise is from the physical, psychological and aesthetic points of view? Stress is a major negative health factor. What studies have been conducted to address this health issue? How does noise affect the health and habitat of wildlife?

#### Public Health and Safety:

What about air quality? What would the effect of additional dust and other pollutants contribute be on the quality of air in the desert. The most precise possible measurements should be used, PM 2.5.

#### Recreation:

The open areas of the desert provide excellent recreational opportunities for those wishing to experience the desert in its unaltered and pristine state. To what degree would the proposed projects diminish or eliminate the potential for such enjoyment? It is also the case that travelers who visit the desert travel through the proposed energy development areas while making their journey through the Mojave Desert. What effect would the proposed projects have on tourism in this area? What studies have been conducted with the Department of the Interior regarding visitors traveling between Joshua Tree National Park, the Mojave National Preserve and Death Valley National Park and along Historic Route 66.

#### Socioeconomics:

What will the effect of energy production development in the desert be on the value of homes and property and on the real estate market in general in the areas effected?  
What have studies shown to be the result on home values in similar situations?

#### Transportation:

What is the cost both in dollars and impact on the environment of the roads that will need to be built or modified to support these projects? What effect will the increase of traffic and attendant pollutants have on the quality of life and experience of the desert? What will the impact be on nonhuman dwellers of the desert?

#### Utilities and Infrastructure:

How would the proposed energy development plans affect existing and proposed utilities and infrastructure, including telecommunications, energy transmission and production, underground pipelines? What new utilities would be constructed and how would they impact our air quality and water (supply, quality)? What impact would they have on our views and how would they affect wildlife corridors and habitats?

#### Water Resources:

Water is an area of great concern. How would the proposed expansion affect the water supply? What programs would be implemented to monitor the water table and to reimburse residents who may be forced to deepen their wells? What programs would be implemented to monitor the quality of the water and what would be done to address adverse impacts on that quality? How would we be assured that access to our water would continue as at present? What steps would be taken to insure the continued quality and availability of water in the existing aquifers? How would water currently available for wildlife be affected, both in quantity and quality?

It is my understanding that the questions I have asked will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement. I hope to be informed at each step of this process according to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. My contact information is at the top of the first page of this letter and I repeat it here:

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